

“Visiting Hours” Study Questions

1. Why do you think Ezra likes “tricks, fooling around, faking accents, and doing imitations” (page 97)?
2. What mood does the narrator establish in the first few paragraphs of the story? How? Give examples of relevant narrative details.
3. In light of the information revealed in the story, why do you think the bed next to Ezra’s is “always empty” (97)? Consider, in particular, the narrator’s comment that she doesn’t like the way Ezra’s nurse looks at him because she is “old enough to be his mother” (114).
4. Why does Ezra’s hospital stay last such a long time? (Consider the significance of the fact that he avoids taking his medicine.)
5. What symbolic meaning do the stories involving the bear family and Goldilocks have? What significance might the transformation of Baby-bear into a daughter instead of a son (106) have? (Consider what is happening in the story when Ezra points out the change and what happens at the top of page 112; consider also Ezra’s comment that Son-bear is “a son of a gun.”)
6. What subtext is suggested by the narrator’s descriptions of her mother and father’s behavior together, e.g. the politeness and romantic behavior? Consider that they say the same things later in the story (112-113) but do not kiss.
7. What information does the story reveal about the nature and cause of Ezra’s injuries?
8. How often do Ezra’s parents visit him in the hospital? (Consider the way the information at the bottom of page 104 is presented, as well as additional comments by the characters in the story.) Why?
9. What do you think of the fact that the narrator’s parents seem to accept her skipping school to be with Ezra so quickly (107-108)? What is suggested by the paragraph in which the narrator’s father comes up behind her (108)? What is ironic about the mother’s statements about Mr. Borden (108)? What is “waiting for [Ezra] in the garage” (112), and why do you think their father bought it?
10. How does the story present Ezra and the narrator’s father? Some details to consider:
 - “I’m not the barbarian you think I am.” (103)
 - “big meaty hands” (112)
 - “I sat and I waited and I listened for my father’s footsteps on the stairs.” (113)
 - “It’s a story about Dad.” (115)
11. How might the moral “it’s easier to recognize madness in other people than to see it in yourself” (110) apply to the story?

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